**ARCHIVES AND CORRUPTION. QUESTIONING SYSTEMS AND BRINGING THEM UP TO DATE**

This February, we have seen the need for updated and truly productive records management systems on two occasions. Both occasions provided proof of the need to end the neglect and shortcomings of the past, in order to provide responses in the present in an area as sensitive as the fight against corruption. The Archivists-Records Managers Association of Catalonia (AAC-GD) declared its firm commitment to making record managers and archivists key allies in clearing up doubts and inconsistencies related to anti-corruption, by signing a cooperation agreement with the Anti-Fraud Office almost a year ago. And we reaffirm all of those commitments. The new legislation on transparency and access to information means that excuses such as not having organized records, or failing to retrieve the information required to solve a case of corruption due to poor conservation of the archive, are no longer acceptable. In the press, we often see how the Catalan and Spanish police forces enter the offices of government agencies, political parties and private companies, and seize documents and computers so that investigation units can search for evidence to prosecute wrongdoers. Many of our professionals have had to suddenly stop doing their ordinary work in order to respond to the judicial authorities' always urgent and hurried requests for records. The fight against corruption requires access to documents and our profession has the necessary experience to facilitate this access. We will not mention specific cases here, but as mentioned above, we will focus on two recent cases in which the archival and records management method was important.

**Statement on the Pujol commission**

On 2 February, the AAC-GD issued a statement expressing its opinion on how the Catalan Ministry of Governance and Institutional Relations had dealt with the request for information by the Catalan Parliament commission of inquiry into fraud, tax evasion and corrupt practices. Although the Commission requested the records last December, in late January 2015 the Ministry of Governance sent a report to the commissioners informing them of its difficulties in retrieving everything that had been requested. Indeed, the request appeared to include a great deal of documents, which were required urgently, in order to question all the people due to appear in relation to the alleged fraud that may have been committed by President Jordi Pujol during his years as the head of the Government of Catalonia. The reasons for the delayed submission of some documents was that they had not been transferred to digital format or were in ‘paper’ archives, and because they were isolated cases, the possibility of recruiting 'specialist' staff was even being considered. In view of the impression that some of the reasons simply avoided the issue, the AAC-GD established its position by stating first that the professional training of those responsible for the safekeeping of documents was being undervalued, and second, that the issue of a supposed lack of staff should not be resolved by hiring temporary ‘specialists’, but instead by reinforcing the central archive structure and increasing existing staff levels. The reaction to the statement by the professional sector both inside and outside the Government of Catalonia was very positive. The opinion of the AAC-GD was even reflected in the words of the Catalan President Artur Mas, who during his appearance before the Commission agreed that he was aware of the ‘complaint’ by the archivists' ‘association’. He did so at the request of MP Oriol Amoros, who raised the question because the members of the commission believed that the report produced was an excuse rather than an accurate justification for the reasons why access to the records was impossible. Nobody says that the Government of Catalonia is unable to provide a response, but there were obvious shortcomings in the Government's position in both this report and in the press release issued on the matter on 28 January. Even the Government discussed the need for a substantial budget allocation to recruit ‘specialist’ staff with the Parliamentary commissioners, in order to prevent the ordinary work of the Government of Catalonia from being hindered or blocked in order to be able to respond to the commissioners' requests for information. This budget allocation has not been officially announced, but it ran into many figures. We will not discuss that issue here, but it seems to be simply another excuse. In short, these are old modi operandorum that can no longer be allowed to continue. Changes must also start here. The way to resolve the inconsistencies in the reports and clarify the commissioners' doubts was to explain in detail the procedures for accessing information, to show where the documents requested were located, to provide the commissioners with access to the central archives and above all, to acknowledge that if Law 10/2001 on archives and records had been implemented correctly, this slowness could perhaps have been dealt with better. As far as our profession is concerned, the backdrop to the case of the Pujol commission is proof that very little investment has been made, and with very little conviction, in improving the administrative processes involved in the production of records, in creating a robust records management system and in the recruitment of genuinely ‘expert’ personnel to undertake good and effective records management. By investment, we do not merely mean the financial kind, but also investment in broad-based and truly comprehensive terms. In terms of ideas and judgement! We repeat that under no circumstances is our statement aimed at calling the internal work done by archivists into question. Nothing could be further from the truth. We want to defend it and make it more visible. We are aware that the statement was circulated and reached many hands and voices within the Government of Catalonia, and very few of those were critical. We were advised of this by three political parties with parliamentary representation, which personally asked us to clarify the statement, because they had received the same impression as we had obtained. These statements seek to highlight things that are taken for granted and which are by no means certain. One of those is the belief that records and their internal organization is an issue that has already been resolved, as many of those currently responsible for the promotion of transparency and access to public information in the Government of Catalonia would have us believe. Another is to make clear that when the AAC-GD demanded a backdrop of transparency, and a focusing of the problem on back office management to ensure real access to all the information was not simply a request by an interest group or industry but instead a demand to highlight a crucial structural problem within government agencies. The fight against corruption ultimately also involves acknowledging the limited resources invested in the reorganization of information. This is something that can only be viewed in a negative light, either due to negligence or carelessness, or even a wilful desire to hinder access to it.

**In search of the lost Barcelona Guàrdia Urbana Detainee Record Book.**

A more specific case of a loss of records was announced by the ombudsman, Rafel Ribó, on 23 February. In the publication of the report on the investigation that took place as a result of the events of 4 February 2006, concerning alleged police brutality towards detainees, the Ombudsman criticized the inexplicable loss of the Barcelona Guàrdia Urbana Detainee Record Book for Ciutat Vella police station where detainees may have been tortured in 2006. This loss was also not explained by Deputy Mayor Joaquim Forns at his press conference on 25 February. He accepted that there was no explanation in law or archival science for the loss of the record book and as such, Barcelona City Council acknowledged that there were irregularities in the case. Those responsible for the management of public records at Ciutat Vella police station were both negligent and unpunished. It should be remembered that this is a series of documents that has not been evaluated and is therefore by default considered worthy of permanent conservation. Destruction of public records that is not notified to the CNAATD may be subject to disciplinary proceedings and in this case may lead to serious or very serious sanctions. According to Spanish legislation on the conservation of police records, the destruction of documents is an offence subject to very serious punishment. Furthermore, the surprising loss of a detainee record book, of which the series is complete, and for which only the book recording those detained prior to 10 October 2007 is missing, is sufficient grounds for suspicion for us to give serious consideration to how the records were managed and to call to account those responsible for its mismanagement. The AAC-GD has compiled information and monitored this case to highlight the need for responsible management and to show how our professionals' methods as archivists and their skill in record management can help to provide a response to ‘sudden" losses of records. The public is increasingly strident in its demands for demanding transparency and clarity. It is the civic responsibility of our profession to declare ourselves in favour of clarity rather than opacity and a lack of oversight. It is our work that helps to make oversight thorough and of high quality. Needless to say, if the public sees us only from the patrimonialist standpoint, it will find it unusual if we express opinions on the fight against corruption. We must continue to foster this change of perspective, so that we are seen as crucial agents in facilitating the retrieval of the required evidence.

The progressive provision of record management systems for this country's organizations must accompany the democratic improvement of our society, and support our citizens' demands for an improved democracy. A good measure of a country's democratic calibre is the condition of its archives, and the dedication of government agencies and private companies to them. The level of accountability and oversight is increasingly high, due to fiscal requirements, the need to reorganize accounting, and the need for more efficient and effective procedures. This learning must be undertaken due to an obvious need for continuous improvement, as well as an urgent need to review the records systems, and especially those containing social records.